(c) As in statement I (*See* below).

(d) As in statement II.

STATEMENT I

THE STEPS TAKEN ARE AS GIVEN BELOW :—

1. Replacement of manual and electro-mechanical exchanges by electronic exchanges.

2. Installing new electronic exchanges on large scale.

3. Providing adequate capacity power plant and stand by power supply. Use of non-conventional power energy like solar energy etc. wherever feasible in cases where normal electric supply is not satisfactory.

4. Providing stable media for the circuits linking the rural exchange to the parent exchange.

5. Providing sufficient circuits to porvide STD and group dialling facilities.

6. Provision of upgraded outdoor plant for subs-lines and providing long distance public telephones and long distances connections on radio systems like M A R R.

STATEMENT II

Yes, Sir. MAX-III electro-mechanical exchanges in the rural areas are proposed to be converted into modernised electronic exchanges and to provide STD facility to these rural exchanges progressively including Andhra Pradesh Telecom Circle subject to the availability of resources.

VIABILITY OF EASTERN ZONAL CORPORATION

2490. SHRI SANTOSH KUMAR SAHU: Will the Minister of Communications be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that the Zonalising the existing telecom set-up arrived at by indepth study at different levels have created doubt about the viability of the proposed Eastern Zonal Corporation;

(b) which are the states being included under different telecom operating zones proposed for the country ; and

(c) what are the viability prospects for Eastern Zone and what is the long term plan in this regard ?

THE MINISTER OF STATE OF THE MINISTRY OF COMMUNICATIONS (SHRI SUKH RAM) : (a) to (c) Do not arise at present as the various aspects of the reorganisation of the Department of Telecommunications including financial viability in the event of zonalisation are still being studied.

BOOM IN TRAFFIC OF POST CARDS

2491. SHRI B. K. HARIPRASAD : Will the Minister of Communications be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government are aware (Economic Times dt. 28th November, 1993) of an unmanageable boom in the traffic of post cards in the wake of cultural|quiz programmes beamed on TV networks:

(b) if so, how much expenditure Government incur against the cost of 15 paise per Post Cards on handling each articles and the cummulative losses estimated for an year; and

(c) whether Government would consider banning of Post Cards for commercial purposes including quiz|contest programmes at the subsidised rate of 15 paise and levy the commercial rate of 60 paise from users ?

THE MINISTER OF STATE OF THE MINISTRY OF COMMUNICATIONS (SHRI SUKH RAM) : (a) While it is known that postcards are used extensively for Quiz competitions broadcast on television, there is no report of unmanageable boom in traffic of postcards.

(b) The Department incurs an expenditure of approximately 156.87 paise per postcard and the loss on account of postcards is estimated to be Rs. 75.40 crores for the year 1993-94.

(c) The suggestion has to be viewed in the light of the fact that categories of post card and the ceiling postage rates thereof are prescribed in the First Schedule to the Indian Post Office Act and therefore are of a statutory nature and not a matter of executive acion. While the issue referred to has come up for consideration, no specific proposal has yet been worked out.

PERMISSION TO TAP BLACK MONEY FOR DEVELOPMENT PROJECTS

2492. SHRI KAMAL MORARKA : Will the Minister of Communications be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that the Telecom Commission has sought the permission of Finance Ministry to tap black money for development projects;

(b) if so, what are the details of the proposals; and

(c) whether the Finance Ministry has given its permission ?

THE MINISTER OF STATE OF THE MINISTRY OF COMMUNICATIONS (SHRI SUKH RAM) : (a) to (c) In view of the resource shortage a suggestion has been made to Ministry of Finance for introduction of some new scheme for share of assistance released to the State mobilising money from parallel economy for investment in Telecom Sector.

DELAY IN DELIVERY OF MONEY ORDERS AND ORDINARY DAK

2493. SHRI KRISHAN LAL SHARMA : Will the Minister of Communications be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that there is a general feeling among the people that there is always delay in delivery of ordinary dak and money orders in the country :

(b) whether Government have analysed the reasons for this delay and if so, the details thereof;

(c) whether Government propose to lay down certain norms|guidelines for quick despatch and delivery of these items for the general benefit; and

(d) if so, the details thereof ?

THE MINISTER OF STATE OF THE MINISTRY OF COMMUNICATIONS (SHRI SUKH RAM) : (a) While there are occasional complaints about delays in delivery of mails and payment of money orders, there is no such general feeling:

(b) Analysis has revealed that delays are due to

— Late running|non-running of mail carrying trains|planes|buses

— abrupt shortage of staff|absenteeism.

— local disturbances such as bandhs|strikes etc.

— difficulties in financing of post offices in interior areas.

(c) General norms|guidelines are already prescribed.

(d) (i) on collection of mails from Letter Boxes, the mails are sorted at the outward mail offices immediately and despatched through the first available mode of transmission. The mails received in the incoming mail offices are sorted and despatched to the delivery Post Offices to catch the earliest delivery.

(ii) For speedy payment of money orders, the line-limits for conveyance of cash and sources of fin-